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are willing to do a fair amount of work anyway. They are enabled, by this method, to accomplish more, or to gain a more nearly complete mastery of the subject with the time and energy which they are able to give to it. But for the student who is only intent on getting a passing mark, it is frequently regarded as a means of reducing the amount of work necessary to the accomplishment of that purpose. To such men it was no real help and may have been an injury in that it tended to deepen the habit of drifting along the line of least resistance. Whether, therefore, this is regarded as an expedient method will depend upon one's idea of the teacher's function. If his function is primarily to be of service to the good student, and to enable him to accomplish the maximum with the strength which he possesses, the method is expedient. If it is primarily to prod up the laggards and help them to acquire a certain standard of industry and of interest in things intellectual, then it is an inexpedient method. On the whole the writer favors this method in the teaching of undergraduates, though it needs to be used with care and prudence.

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ECONOMICS FOR CHILDREN

Can economics be taught in the schools of the lower grade? This question really asks whether it can be taught at all to the vast majority of citizens, and whether a government can be conducted in the light of such knowledge of the subject as a people can thus secure. A great part of what governments are now compelled to do lies in the realm of practical economics. We are beginning to regulate freight charges, to conserve and wisely utilize natural resources, to change our currency and remodel our tariff. We are taking a hand in the settlement of the wages problem and considering whether the activities of the state shall be so extended as to include the management of railroads, mines, and forests. On all these questions we have to appeal to the people and it is their rights and interests that are involved in the decisions that are reached. It is a very great

jury before which the advocates of any particular policy have to come, but it is not a jury in the case of which ignorance is an advantage.

The knowledge of some truths of political economy can be imparted to young children—so much may be said without reservation. A boy may enter the grammar school having a power to reason clearly on important practical subjects. He may not have studied the refinements of theory, or mastered any intricate formulas, and may not have troubled his head with niceties of definition; but it is entirely possible that he should have learned what wealth is, and how it is produced and distributed—if only his teachers have the art of disentangling what is essential and simple and what is non-essential and complex.

Probably most persons would regard the Austrian theory of value as a scientific refinement, but there is a simple truth in it which a boy ten years old can master; and I know this because I have seen one of them do it. As he sits by a dining-table a child of ten is able to see that he wants a first slice of bread more than he wants a second one, and still more than he wants a third. It is not necessary to call this fact a “law of diminishing utility of successive increments of consumers’ goods,” although after a time the boy would get the meaning of that formula. The simple possibility of gradually satiating wants, by supplying more and more of the thing wanted, is all that it is at first necessary to see. The child can be made to perceive that if in the butler’s pantry there were a given amount of bread, which must be disposed of that day or go altogether to waste, and if the waitress were a bread-merchant who owned this supply, there would be a limit to the price she could ask and still dispose of the whole quantity. No one would want the last remnant of this commodity enough to pay very much for it, and this fact, for the time being, would suffice to make bread cheap. If, moreover, the supply every day were likely to be what it is on this particular day, the bread would remain cheap.

This is one of the score of principles which, when stated technically and in abstract terms, appear to most people strange and complex, though in simple terms they appear nearly self-

evident. It is entirely possible to strip of technicalities a very large number of economic principles and make them simpler than the problems of mathematics with which a child of ten years is expected to grapple.

To secure this result it is, in my judgment, best to impart the knowledge first in a conversational way and with an abundance of questioning, which will enlist the pupil's interest and set his reasoning powers at work. After such a preparation a very simple textbook is useful. This plan exacts from the teacher something which may not always be supplied, but it would be strange if in any large school it were not possible to find some teacher capable of supplying it. The extent in the United States to which economics is now taught is all in favor of the plan. Probably in no country in the world are courses of instruction in this science given in so many schools as in our country. Though we have more teachers and more students of economics than other nations, we need more than we have; for we have a correspondingly large number of self-assertive citizens, who, whether they know anything of economics or not, will take a practical hand in legislating on the subject. It is well that in various directions they should have interest enough to act promptly and insight enough to avoid blunders. It is well that our business machinery should be steadily improved and that the outlook for workers should be bright enough to keep them from the temptation offered by revolutionary schemes. A condition of this is economic insight. It can be gained early in life and that too by the great mass of our people.

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My experience in teaching political economy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology can be of only limited value to others, for the instruction in an engineering school is necessarily subordinated to a definite professional object. The course in economics is prescribed and also narrowly limited as to time.